

Reviewing the Review – Monday Night Raw: December 29, 2014

I needed some time to think about this one...and for the New Year but the former sounds better. This show ended the year and for once felt like something that was a much bigger deal than the last several weeks of shows. There's a simple yet overarching theme for this show which has one major outlier, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. Let's get to it.

Guest GM's Edge (wearing a Sami Zayn shirt, despite rumors that Zayn won't be on the main roster until 2016) and Christian opened things up and instantly showed more energy than most of the roster combined. There's a chemistry between them that few tag teams have ever had before. They made lame matches but Lesnar and Heyman came out to threaten the retired Canadians. Yes Christian, the guy that hasn't been able to go six months without being injured and barely ever wrestles anymore is retired. Why did this surprise anyone?

Cena came out and tried an AA on Lesnar but Brock bailed. This was a bit shorter than most opening segments but felt rather pointless. Stuff like spending two or three minutes setting up the Cutting Edge Peep Show for later really could have been cut out and just announced later on. It feels like they're just taking extra time because they can, and that makes for a very dull show. Also Lesnar really didn't need to be here for this segment as he came out, looked menacing and then ran when Cena tried the AA. How many thousands did he make for that?

Ziggler beat Rusev in a non-title champion vs. champion match that had the same problem as so many matches recently: the ending was obvious from the second the match was announced. This makes for some very dull moments, as instead of getting into a match and wondering about the drama, you're sitting there waiting for one of the guys to get counted out or disqualified. The match was good enough while it lasted, but I never got into any of the near falls.

Ryback made the save after the match and stayed in the ring after the

match. He gave a long speech about the story of his career, focusing on his leg injury that kept him out for over a year and how he has his dream job now, but wants to make Rusev his next meal. In about five minutes, Ryback has established a better connection with the fans that Roman Reigns has established in all the months he's been pushed.

He told us something about him that we may not have known and it's given us a reason to care about him. Even if it's something this simple, just talking to the fans for a minute instead of reading off some prepared statement that may or may not fit your character is going to do wonders for a lot of the guys. This wasn't anything profound, but it did more for Ryback than anything else he's done since he debuted. I'd really like to see more of this kind of thing from a lot of the wrestlers, especially if it means sacrificing some stupid comedy match or backstage segment that doesn't advance anything.

Nikki beat Natalya in just over a minute, making her entire run of fighting the Bellas a huge waste of time.

The Usos took the Tag Team Titles back from Miz/Mizdow in a surprising ending. My guess is this sets up Mizdow's face turn, but I really don't know how far he's going to go after that. It's the difference between something someone is doing getting over and that someone getting over. Sandow is getting reactions right now for imitating Miz, but what happens when he can't do that anymore?

Cesaro cut a Ravenesque promo talking about how the company says he doesn't connect with the fans. He doesn't care about connecting because all that matters is what he does inside this ring. That's an important line because he actually said these four ropes, so Cole spent the entire match burying him for the slip up. Stuff like that is what drives me crazy about WWE anymore. It's basically a bad comedy hour to get the announcers' characters over and if they have to bury the talent and ignore the promos and matches in the process, that's just fine.

Bad News Barrett returned to beat Cesaro, making the entire promo pointless anyway. If you didn't know it was a waste already, just listen to Cole rip on Cesaro for a simple slip of the tongue. I'd LOVE to ask

Vince why he's ok with that kind of commentary.

Luke Harper cut another great promo in the shadows, calling himself a nightmare come to life. These things are like 15 seconds long each and are absolutely chilling. He then beat Jack Swagger in a match that was much better than I was expecting. It still wasn't very good but it did its job very well.

Cena and Edge buried the hatchet to officially end their feud. Did anyone think it was still going? Apparently the writers did because this becomes something resembling a plot point later.

The long match of the night saw Roman Reigns beat Seth Rollins via DQ when Big Show interfered. I know a lot of people (myself included) haven't been thrilled with Reigns as he's scheduled to go to the top of the company, but no one can make a long feud with Big Show seem interesting. But again, he's a guy in his 40s who has been around forever and that makes him exactly the same as Shawn, Undertaker or HHH right?

Bray Wyatt said his usual stuff about the ambulance match with Ambrose next week. This is being billed as the end of their feud.

Daniel Bryan came out, teased the audience for a bit, and announced that he was going to continue his career and enter the 2015 Royal Rumble. This is GREAT news and not just from a wrestling perspective. The guy has worked so hard over the years and finally saw it pay off, only to almost have it all take away. He deserves this chance and I hope he's around for years to come. I smiled a lot when he said he's coming back and I'm sure a lot of other people did too.

Ascension debuted and squashed Miz/Mizdow. This was called a waste of time by some fans, but what else would you like them to do here?

The big ending to the show was the Cutting Edge Peep Show with guest Seth Rollins. Seth also brought out the Big Show before nailing Christian and putting Edge's head on the briefcase. He threatened to break Edge's neck unless Cena brought back the Authority, and that's where we need to stop for a little chat.

There are two ways of looking at this and thankful one is a bigger deal than the other. First of all, Seth Rollins looks like the epitome of EVIL here as he's threatening to cripple a husband and father for the sake of bringing back the Authority. This is how a heel is supposed to do things. Not with lawyers or winning because of a distraction, but by threatening to do horrible things to someone who can't defend himself. I loved that part and it made Rollins feel like a top heel.

The downside is he's basically doing all this so his big buddies can come back because he can't handle life without them around. Rollins goes from pure evil to a lapdog for the Authority because WE MUST PRAISE THE AUTHORITY EVERY CHANCE WE GET OR THEY MIGHT BE SAD AND DESTROY THE UNIVERSE! It gets very tiresome hearing Rollins, who has had the best 2014 of anyone, whine because the Authority is gone. It's ok to have someone get over without them, but WWE doesn't seem to see things that way.

Anyway, Cena allowed the Authority to come back but Rollins tried to cripple Edge anyway. That's more of that "pure evil" thing I was talking about. I even said to myself that if he's a real villain, he'll hurt Edge anyway, and that's exactly what he tried to do. The numbers beat Cena down though and Lesnar and Heyman came out to celebrate...and so did the Authority. Well of course they're here, just in case Rollins had some master plan to bring them back and Cena just happened to make up with Edge and wanted to save him.

So yeah the Authority is back, four weeks after we last saw them. I knew they were coming back at some point, but I really don't see the need for it to be this soon. Couldn't they have done this after the Rumble, giving them two months to prepare for Wrestlemania? Having them be in the back ruined whatever suspension of disbelief I can have in wrestling and it really got on my nerves. They're back though, and I'm sure dozens of people somewhere are thrilled by it.

Overall, I actually liked this show quite a bit for one simple reason: stuff actually happened. Instead of just rehashing the same Survivor Series matches over and over, we actually got some fresh stories and promo time from the wrestlers to let them build up their characters. The

ending was annoying but at least it's going to get us onto the Road to Wrestlemania. Give us more of the talking and character development and less of the repeats and we'll be in a much better place. Well that and cut out the extra hour but that goes without saying.

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